

**Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo  
Friday, August 28, 2015**

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**Notes from Commissioner Wagner**

## **1. Council approves Strategic Plan to prepare R.I. students for success; Board to consider adoption of plan in October**

On Monday, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education unanimously approved the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan for PK-12 and adult education. The plan will prepare Rhode Island students for success by teaching them to think critically, to work collaboratively, and to become creative, self-motivated, and culturally competent. The strategic plan establishes six priorities to guide the work of RIDE and to focus the efforts of school districts, partner agencies, and other education stakeholders over the next five years. The six priorities are:

- Teacher and Leader Support;
- Early Childhood Education;
- Personalized Learning Statewide;
- Globally Competent Graduates;
- Informed Instructional Decision-Making; and
- Student-Centered Resource Investments.

As the 26 members of the Ambassador Design Team developed and wrote this plan, their work has reflected the input of thousands of people across the state, including educators, business leaders, parents, elected officials, and others. Thousands of Rhode Islanders contributed their insight and guidance throughout the

strategic-planning process – through surveys, focus groups, and community meetings. The result is a powerful plan that emphasizes teacher and leader support, early learning, greater rigor, and more informed instruction – the basic building blocks of a high-functioning system. Building on this consensus, we will work with all stakeholders to ensure that our state is moving forward together toward educational excellence.

The full Board of Education will vote on the plans for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education at a meeting in October. Supt. Michael Barnes and Christopher Haskins, of the Paul Cuffee School, served as members of the design team, and we are grateful for their contributions.

You can see the plan here:

[www.ride.ri.gov/2020Vision](http://www.ride.ri.gov/2020Vision)

## **2. Working group convenes to improve educator preparation, teaching and learning in R.I.**

This morning, Governor Raimondo's office, along with RIDE and the Office of Postsecondary Education, convened a working group on educator preparation. The group will develop recommendations to develop recommendations to increase the diversity of the teaching force in Rhode

Island and improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in the STEM subject areas.

RIDE has taken steps recently to support educator preparation in Rhode Island. We revised the standards for approval of preparation programs to focus on enhanced multicultural awareness, to provide higher-quality clinical placements with more preparedness for work in schools in urban settings, to increase the attention programs pay to student learning, to develop better assessments of candidates' progress during their time in the preparation programs, and to establish stronger partnerships between our LEAs and preparation programs. We introduced index reports on the preparation programs, which provide information about each of the outcomes and the quality of each program. These reports are available on our website, at:

<http://www3.ride.ri.gov/RIEdPrepIndex/Default.aspx>

During this school year we will begin our new visitation process for program approval, a process that is aligned with our revised standards.

A grant from the National Governors Association supports this initiative. Superintendents Capellan and Maher are among the 33 members of the working group.

### **3. Campaign against chronic absenteeism to launch on Tuesday**

On Tuesday, Attendance Works, a national nonprofit organization, will release a report on attendance and chronic absenteeism, highlighting the connection between good attendance in the early grades and success in school.

Above all else, we need to provide all school children with high-quality instruction and children need to attend school every day and ready to learn – well-nourished, well-rested, and up to date on their classwork and homework. Because we recognize the importance of regular school attendance, Rhode Island is one of the few states to report publicly on rates of chronic absenteeism (students missing more than 10 percent of the school days). We strongly encourage our school leaders to reach out to families whose children are missing too many school days, especially in the early grades. Every day in school counts! Through strong partnerships between schools, families, and providers of social services, we can all work together to keep children in school and on track for success.

Rhode Island is a partner with Attendance Works in its campaign to reduce chronic absenteeism, and one of the reports Attendance Works will release will show the rates of chronic absenteeism in Rhode Island by school district. The report will commend us for being one of the first states to report rates of chronic absenteeism.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will issue a news release supporting the Attendance Works campaign, and I will issue a statement in support as well. We are working with Attendance Works and KIDS COUNT to direct media to some of the successful campaigns in Rhode Island school districts to reduce chronic absenteeism. You can find our published data on chronic absenteeism in Rhode Island on InfoWorks (<http://infoworks.ride.ri.gov/>), the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook (<http://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Factbook%202015/Education/EducationSection-2015FB.pdf> see pages 152 ff), and on the RI DataHUB (<http://ridatahub.org/topic/education/>).

#### **4. Five R.I. teachers named finalists for President Award for mathematics, science teaching**

Congratulations to our five state finalists for the 2014 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The awards are the highest honor that the U.S. government bestows specifically for elementary- and secondary-school mathematics and science (including computer science) teaching. The National Science Foundation administers the awards on behalf of the White House. Our finalists are:

*Mathematics*

Nicolle Green, E.G. Robertson Elementary School,  
Warwick  
Barbara Pellegrino, Harold F. Scott Elementary School,  
Warwick

*Science*

Susan Moore, Claiborne Pell Elementary School,  
Newport  
Cynthia Ripley, Gallagher Middle School, Smithfield  
Debra Turchetti-Ramm, Sarah Dyer Barnes  
Elementary School, Johnston

(Note: Yes, officially, these teachers are finalists for the 2014 awards. The award alternates annually between elementary-school and secondary-school teachers.)

**5. North Providence High School invited to participate  
in national showcase of success**

The National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Center for Secondary School Redesign have selected a team from North Providence High School to attend the Breaking Ranks 2016 School Showcase and share its stories of success. In selecting North Providence High, the Association and the Center wrote:

Your commitment to student personalization and mastery of school redesign initiatives has made your school's story one that we believe all those in

attendance will benefit from hearing. Such an innovative approach showcases the creative programs and initiatives implemented by schools like yours to teams of educators from around the nation.

North Providence High was one of only 18 schools invited to participate in the Showcase. Congratulations to the students, teachers, and school leaders, in particular Principal Joseph Goho, on the great work under way at North Providence High!

**From RIDE**

***Early Learning:***

**6. Schools encouraged to apply for Rising Star Awards for early-learning programs**

Exceed, the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge statewide initiative, has launched the Rising Star Awards to recognize programs achieving an advanced level in the BrightStars quality-rating system. Public schools that increase their BrightStars quality rating or join Brightstars at a star level of two or higher are eligible for a Rising Star Award. Applications will be accepted through December. Additional information about the Rising Star Awards and the application process are available [here](#) and on the Exceed [website](#). Programs needing technical assistance are encouraged to work with the Center for Early Learning

Professionals and BrightStars staff as they move up the quality continuum.

### ***School Climate:***

#### **7. RIDE announces revised web page on school discipline**

As we approach the new school year, RIDE has updated, revised, and added many resources to the School Discipline web page. Naturally, our emphasis is on reducing the need for school discipline and on improving the school climate to keep students productively engaged in school.

Some of the new features include a flow chart to remind school leaders of the Procedures and Requirements related to student suspensions. The document can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Health-Safety/Discipline/School-Removals-Procedures-Requirements.pdf>

This document should be shared with all school leaders, especially those involved in school discipline. It is important to remember the differing requirements for students in special education and those in general

education. The document includes a flow chart for each population, along with legal references and best-practice suggestions.

This year we have added Advanced Reports for examining school suspensions by using the InfoWorks website. School leaders may search various data reports in InfoWorks using the Advanced Report feature. This may be a helpful tool in examining and measuring school-improvement strategies related to school climate and discipline.

As you know, out-of-school suspension should not be considered as the first strategy in school discipline. It removes the student from the learning environment and can increase a student's disengagement from school. It is always important to identify causes of challenging behavior and to provide strategies to prevent reoccurrence. We have added many tools and strategies for prevention and alternatives to school suspension, which can also be found on the School Discipline page of the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/HealthSafety/DisciplineinSchools.aspx>.

We hope these tools will be helpful as we continue to reduce the overall suspension rates in Rhode Island schools.

## ***Dual Enrollment:***

### **8. RIDE to hold webinars to address questions about dual, concurrent enrollment**

RIDE will hold a series of webinars to review frequently asked questions that have arisen over the summer as schools and districts adopt policies and procedures to support students who are taking advantage of the opportunity to take college coursework while they are still enrolled in high school. The webinars will address the following topics, and there will ample time for Q&A.

- under-18 student grade release for dual enrollment;
- adoption of a local dual-enrollment policy and its key components;
- staff designated to coordinate dual and concurrent enrollment ;
- suggested textbooks purchasing process;
- fall 2015 drop dates at each institution;
- Prepare RI dual-enrollment funding; and
- data collection and reporting requirements.

Note: Data collection for dual and concurrent enrollment for this school year will be discussed on the weekly Data Collection Webinar for data managers on **Tuesday** (September 1). Additionally, you can submit any questions to the RIDEmap helpdesk, at [support.ride.ri.gov](http://support.ride.ri.gov).

Please click the links below to choose a webinar date and to register. These webinars will cover the same topics and are open to all district and school staff concerned with dual and concurrent enrollment. The following date options are available:

- **Thursday** (September 3) from 4 - 5 p.m. [Register here for September 3rd.](#)
- Friday, September 4, from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m..  
[Register here for September 4th.](#)
- Tuesday, September 8, from 3 - 4 p.m. [Register here for September 8th.](#)
- Thursday, September 10, from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m..  
[Register here for September 10th.](#)

### ***Assessments:***

#### **9. Paper-based and computer-based administration of ACCESS for ELLs assessments available this year**

This school year, our annual state progress assessment for English Learners, ACCESS for ELLs, can be administered through the traditional paper-based format *or* through the computer-based ACCESS 2.0 format. Some of the features of the new computer-based assessment include:

- increased student engagement through a more dynamic testing experience;
- built-in accommodations and accessibility features appropriate for a range of student needs;

- simultaneous administration of multiple grades; and
- increased ease for test administrators, who will no longer need to administer and score the Speaking test one-on-one.

ELL Directors and Coordinators will identify which format their LEAs are choosing to use by Friday, September 4. The ACCESS test administration window will be from January 11 through February 19.

For more information on the new ACCESS 2.0 computer-based assessment, please visit:

<https://www.wida.us/assessment/access20.aspx#about>.

***Educators:***

**10. Educators with certificates expiring August 31 must renew by September 15 or potentially face new requirements**

Educators who hold certificates expiring on **Monday** (August 31) should be sure to submit their renewal applications into our Certification Office. Reminders were sent earlier in the summer. We are currently reviewing renewal requests that arrived in the office on August 14. By accessing the district portal in eCert, you can

monitor the status of certificates for educators with 2015 expiration dates. Educators who miss the August 31, deadline will be able to reinstate their certificate by paying the appropriate fees, but without needing to complete any additional requirements, through **September 15**. After that date, educators must meet any additional requirements noted at the time of review in order to reinstate an expired certificate.

### **11. RIDE hiring partners to support principals**

RIDE is seeking to hire part-time consultants to support the principal partnership. The principal partnership provides job-embedded coaching to administrators supporting the educator evaluation and support process. The consultant will partner with two or three principals throughout the year and will provide support as needed. Supports may include but are not limited to conducting co-observations, reviewing feedback, calibrating on Student Learning Objective approval and scoring, conferencing preparation, professional development planning, and reviewing data.

Applicants must have experience implementing educator evaluation in Rhode Island as a building administrator and should have experience providing training or coaching to evaluators or principals. Because coaching often occurs during the school day, applicants must have flexible schedules and must be available during school

hours. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to [lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov) by **September 11**.

**12. *Additional workshop for new evaluators  
scheduled for October 1 and 2***

RIDE will offer a two-day version of the workshop for new evaluators on October 1 and 2 at the Shepard Building (80 Washington St./255 Westminster St, Providence). All evaluators new to the Rhode Island Model who have not yet attended the workshop for new evaluators should plan on attending this workshop. The workshop will focus on preparing evaluators to accurately observe and score practice, provide high-quality feedback, set and approve Student Learning/Outcome Objectives, and use the Educator Performance and Support System. Register for the workshop on [eRIDE](#). If you have questions about the workshop, please contact Lauren Matlach, at [lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov](mailto:lauren.matlach@ride.ri.gov).

***Data:***

**13. LEAs asked to keep School Profile data up to date**

The School Profile module within eRIDE is used to collect detailed information on districts and schools. It is important that this information is kept up to date throughout the year, as the Master Directory and other

system are reliant on this data. If you have any questions about the School Profile data, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at: <https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

#### **14. Data-manager training scheduled for Thursday (September 3)**

RIDE will hold a training session for SASID, Enrollment, and School Profile modules within eRIDE on **Thursday** (September 3), for data managers, IT directors, and other data-collections staff. You do not need to be new to data collections to participate; existing staff members are more than welcome to come as a refresher.

If you would like to participate in this training session, please [register here](#).

#### **15. Data collections open, some are due next month – *Action Item***

The following are some data-collection deadlines timetables for next month:

- September 1: [Graduate and Dropout Reporting via Enrollment Census](#) - Opens
- September 1: [Monthly Reimbursements for Nutrition Programs](#) - Opens
- September 1: [Summer Exits Through Enrollment Census](#) – Opens

- September 30: [Personnel Data Collection \(PDC\)](#) – Due
- September 30: [Special Ed Evaluations](#) - Due

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

**16. *Reminder: Renaissance data-sharing agreement must be renewed at start of new school year***

Your data extraction information is valid only for one year. Each year, the information you have extracted will be cleared on July 31. At the beginning of each school year (any time after August 1), you will need to accept the data-sharing agreement again and make your current data-sharing selections.

We have discovered a glitch with the Renaissance data transfer process, and we believe that the data managers have remediated the issue. If you have signed the data-sharing agreement and do not see your data in the Instructional Support System within a week, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

**17. *Reminder: LEAs asked to submit 2015-16 TCS data as soon as possible***

Please submit your 2015-16 Teacher, Course, Student (TCS) data as soon as possible. The TCS collection is a daily collection; therefore, we continually update the data and the data do not need to be perfect or complete on the initial upload. The TCS data are important as these data form the foundation for many data verifications and technology systems, including the Instructional Support System.

If you have any questions about the TCS data, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

***RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:***

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>